

REMARKS

Entry of this Amendment in accordance with the provisions of 37 CFR §1.114 is respectfully requested, noting that this Amendment is filed as a Submission with a Request for Continued Examination (RCE) on even date herewith.

The present Amendment is in response to the Final Office Action mailed July 5, 2006. As noted at the outset of this Amendment, no shortened statutory period was set as the period for reply in the PTOL-326 form. Therefore, it is applicants understanding that the response date in the present matter is being handled in accordance with the statement under "Period for Reply" in the PTOL-326 Form that:

"If no period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire Six (6) Months from the mailing date of this communication."

Accordingly, treatment of the present amendment (and the RCE filed herewith) according to this statement is respectfully requested.

Reconsideration and removal of the objection to the Specification is respectfully requested. As requested by the Examiner in paragraph 1 on page 2 of the Office Action, a Substitute Specification is submitted herewith (**Appendix A**). The undersigned attorney hereby states that no new matter is presented in this Substitute Specification. With regard to this, a marked copy of the original Specification, showing changes made (**Appendix B**).

Reconsideration and allowance of the newly submitted claims 11-19 over the cited prior art from the Final Office Action, including Nishida and Parkinson, used in rejecting the previously submitted claims 1-10, is respectfully requested. By the present Amendment, the new independent

claims 11 and 16 each define that in addition to including the other specified materials in the claim, the recording film includes:

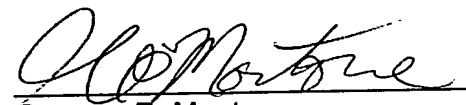
"At least one element selected from Zn and Cd of 25 atom percent to 35 atom percent."

Inasmuch as none of the cited references, including the prior art to Nishida and Parkinson used in rejecting the previous claims, teach or suggest the use of this specific element, particularly in conjunction with the other elements recited in the independent claims 11 and 16 for a recording film, reconsideration and allowance of the newly presented independent claims 11 and 16 and their respective dependent claims is respectfully requested.

If the Examiner believes there are any matters which can clarified either by way of a personal or telephone interview, the Examiner is invited to contact Applicants undersigned attorney at the number indicated below.

To the extent necessary, Applicants petition for an extension of time under 37 CFR §1.136. Please charge any shortage in the fees due in connection with the filing of this paper, including extension of time fees, to Deposit Account No. 01-2135 (Case No. 500.43579X00) and please credit any excess fees to such deposit account.

Respectfully submitted,
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GEM/dks
Attachments:

Appendix A – Substitute Specification
Appendix B – Marked-up Version Showing Changes

S.N. 100790,881

APPENDIX B

Marked-Up Version Showing Changes

MEMORY DEVICE



Substitute Specification

The present application claims priority from Japanese application JP2003-081724, filed on March 25, 2003, the content of which is hereby incorporated by reference into this application.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a semiconductor nonvolatile memory, and in memory and, in particular, to a recording device using a phase change material.

There is An example of a nonvolatile memory using a phase change film ~~known from the past,~~ which is described in detail in United States Patent No. 5,883,827. for instance. This nonvolatile memory is a phase change memory in which a crystalline state of a memory element changes according to Joule heat ~~due to~~ (i.e., heat energy) caused by a current passing in the memory element itself and memory information is thereby written. As ~~it causes~~ the temperature is caused to exceed 600°C ~~with~~ by the Joule heat and melts thereby melting a recording layer once when becoming amorphous, a resistance value of the memory element is changed ~~changes by~~ two to three digits according to the crystalline state, although its write current is high.

This memory uses the resistance value as a signal, and so a read signal is large and sense operation is easy.

Fig. 2 shows a ~~skeleton~~ schematic diagram of a configuration of the phase change memory in Fig. 12

of United States Patent No. 5,883,827. The phase
change memory is comprised of a memory array, a row
decoder XDEC, a column decoder YDEC, a read circuit RC
and a write circuit WC. The memory array has a memory
5 cell MCpr ($p'=0, 1, \dots, n$, $r=0, 1, \dots, m$) placed at each
intersection of a word line WLp ($p=1, \dots, n$) and a data
line DLr ($r=1, \dots, m$). Each memory cell has a memory
element RM and a select transistor QM connected in
series inserted between a data line DL and a ground
10 potential. A word line WL is connected to a gate of
the select transistor, and a column select line YSr
($r=1, \dots, m$) is connected to a corresponding column
select switch Qar, respectively.

According to such a configuration, the select
15 transistor on the word line selected by the row decoder
XDEC conducts, and the column select switch
corresponding to the column select line selected by the
column decoder YDEC ~~further~~ also conducts. A current
path is thereby formed in a selected memory cell so
20 that a read signal is generated on a common data line
I/O. The resistance value in the selected memory cell
is different ~~according to~~ depending on the memory
information, and so the voltage outputted to the common
data line I/O is different ~~according to~~ depending on
25 the memory information. This difference is determined
by the read circuit RC ~~so as to read~~ which reads the
memory information of the selected memory cell.

JP-A-2001-502848 (corresponding to U.S.

patent 5,825,046) describes a memory material including a transition metal element as the memory material used for an electrical memory element. According to a definition in the past, the transition metal element
5 does not include a metal from the 2b group (of the Periodic Table of Elements) in many cases. However, the specification defines those up to the 2b group as the transition metal elements. An embodiment thereof describes a Ge-Sb-Te material as including Ti of less
10 than 10 atom percent and so on.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

However, a phase change memory expected as a next generation semiconductor nonvolatile memory uses a recording film material of an optical disk as a phase
15 change layer. Nevertheless, the recording film material of the optical disk represented by $\text{Ge}_2\text{Sb}_2\text{Te}_5$ ~~is~~ Ge₂Sb₂Te₅ is not sufficiently heat-resistant for a semiconductor memory required to be usable at a temperature higher than that for the optical disk.

20 Therefore, an object of the present invention is to provide a nonvolatile memory having an optimum resistance value when rendered as a small-area element and capable of high-temperature operation.

The above object is attained by using the
25 ~~recording film material for, as a phase change film as~~
the recording film material of the nonvolatile memory,
~~recording memory for recording~~ information by causing a

reversible phase change between a crystal phase and an amorphous phase, the material including (1) a finite amount of at least one element selected from the group consisting of Ge and Sb, and (2) Te of 40 atom percent or more, and (3) at least one element selected from the elements in a 2b group, 1b group, 3a to 7a groups and an 8 group of 20 atom percent to 50 atom percent.

Here, it is for the sake of keeping a high crystallization temperature that the composition of the phase change film includes Te of 40 atom percent or more and, also, includes at least one element selected from the elements in a 2b group, 1b group, 3a to 7a groups and an 8 group of 20 atom percent to 50 atom percent. ~~It~~ Such will be described by taking Zn as a representative element of the 2b group, 1b group, 3a to 7a groups and 8 group, and Ge as a representative of at least one element selected from the group consisting of Ge and Sb as examples. In the case of a composition including a lot of Zn, it is ~~thinkable~~ conceivable that Ge-Te is incorporated in an amorphous network of Zn-Te having strong bonding power where a stable crystal system is mutually different, resulting in keeping the high crystallization temperature as a whole. Here, it is ~~thinkable~~ assumed that, due to addition of Ge, it becomes more covalently bound due to strongly ionic ZnTe so that the amorphous network (network structure) can hardly be deformed while it ~~is~~ becomes crystallized at a high speed like dominoes once

the crystallization starts.

Fig. 13 shows a relationship between an amount of Zn added to $\text{Ge}_{25}\text{Te}_{75}$ and a melting point. The melting point of a solid-phase portion is at 900°C or higher if Zn is 20 atom percent to 50 atom percent (i.e., if the atomic percent of Zn is 20 to 50). The melting point of the solid-phase portion is high even in the case of over 50 atom percent (i.e., an atomic percent of above 50). However, in the case of over 50 atom percent, oxidation resistance is drastically reduced and a recording layer is damaged or exfoliated in an a memory element production process so that it is difficult to pass it to a final process.

Fig. 14 shows a relationship between the amount of Zn added to $\text{Ge}_{25}\text{Te}_{75}$ and a maximum operating temperature of a memory element described in the embodiment. An element operation at 140°C or higher is possible if Zn is in a range of 20 atom percent to 50 atom percent. In the case of an automotive engine control purpose, requested specification of automotive manufacturers is the calls for a maximum operation at temperature of 140°C , which is higher than 120°C as the maximum operating temperature of 120°C of an ordinary memory element, and it can be satisfied by the configuration herein. However, the requested specification cannot be satisfied by a material composition including Ti of less than 10 atom percent, as described in JP-A-2001-502848.

Cd, which is in the same 2b group as Zn, shows a little less but nearly equivalent heat resistance. As for the melting point and crystallization temperature, the elements in the 1b group, 3a to 7a groups and an 8 group are lower than those including the 2b-group elements, but ~~are~~ remain durable ~~endurable~~ at 130°C so as to withstand continuous running for less than ten hours if accommodated in a heat insulating case.

10 Therefore, in the case of the memory device using the material of the present invention, crystallization temperature is high, and the high-temperature operation and high-temperature memory holding can be expected.

15 Other objects, features and advantages of the invention will become apparent from the following description of the embodiments of the invention taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

20 BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

Fig. 1 is a diagram showing a configuration example of a memory array using a memory cell comprised of one memory element and one select transistor for changing resistance according to memory information
25 according to the present invention;

Fig. 2 is a diagram showing a ~~past~~ prior art configuration example of the memory array using the memory cell comprised of one memory element and one

select transistor for changing the resistance according to the memory information;

Fig. 3 is a diagram showing a relationship between a pulse width and a temperature necessary for a phase change of the memory element;

Fig. 4 is a diagram showing a current to voltage characteristic of the memory element;

Fig. 5 is a diagram showing timing of a memory array reading operation according to the present invention;

Fig. 6 is a diagram showing timing of a memory array writing operation according to the present invention;

Fig. 7 is a diagram showing a layout of the memory array according to the present invention;

Fig. 8 is a sectional view schematically showing the configuration of the memory array shown in the layout in Fig. 7;

Fig. 9 is a diagram showing another layout of the memory array according to the present invention;

Fig. 10 is a sectional view showing the configuration of the portion along a line A to A' shown in the layout in Fig. 9;

Fig. 11 is a sectional view showing the configuration of the portion along a line B to B' shown in the layout in Fig. 9;

Fig. 12 is a diagram showing the configuration of a multilayer memory element array used

in combination with a mirror array;

Fig. 13 is a diagram showing a change in a melting point of a solid-phase portion when adding Zn to $\text{Ge}_{25}\text{Te}_{75}$; and

5 Fig. 14 is a diagram showing a change in a maximum operating temperature of the memory element when adding Zn to $\text{Ge}_{25}\text{Te}_{75}$.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

(First Embodiment)

10 Hereafter, embodiments of the present invention will be described in detail by using the accompanying drawings. Though there is no particular restriction as to circuit elements constituting blocks of the embodiments, they are typically formed on one
15 semiconductor substrate such as a single crystal silicon by employing a semiconductor integrated circuit technology such as CMOS (Complementary MOS Transistor) in the public domain. Furthermore, they are created by using a chalcogenide material for showing a phase
20 change as a hybrid to an integrated circuit creation technology.

(Memory Array Configuration)

Fig. 1 shows a configuration example of a memory array according to the present invention. Fig.
25 1 also shows a row decoder XDEC, a column decoder YDEC, a read circuit RC and a write circuit WC necessary for an operation of the memory array. This configuration

is characterized in that a source line parallel to a data line is provided, and a precharge circuit for equipotentially driving both the data lines and the source lines and a circuit for selectively driving a
5 select source line are placed so as to generate a current path only on a select cell at an intersection of a selected word line and a selected source line.

As with the aforementioned Fig. 2, the configuration of the memory array having a memory cell
10 of $n \times m$ bits is shown. An element constituting the memory cell is a memory element RM using variable resistance of a select transistor QM and the chalcogenide material.

The row decoder XDEC selects a word line WL
15 according to a row address. The column decoder YDEC drives a column select line YS according to a column address. As a column select switch QA according to a selected column select line YS conducts, a selected memory cell is connected to the read circuit RC and the
20 write circuit WC via a common data line I/O. Here, QA1 to QAm may be regarded as forming a first switch circuit for selecting one of a plurality of data lines (DL1 to DLm) and connecting it to a common data line. QB1 to QBm may be regarded as forming a second switch
25 circuit for selecting one of a plurality of source lines (SL1 to SLm) and connecting it to a source voltage supply line.

The memory array configuration has the

following three characteristics. First, a plurality (m pieces here) of source lines SL_r ($r=1, \dots, m$) in parallel with the data lines DL are placed, and sources of the transistors QM in a column direction are

5 connected in common to the source lines SL. Secondly, a plurality (m pieces here) of NMOS transistors Q_{ar} are inserted between each data line DL_r ($r=1, \dots, M$) and the common data line I/O and a plurality of NMOS

10 transistors Q_{br} ($r=1, \dots, m$) are inserted between each source line SL_r and a voltage terminal VSL, and ~~these~~ the transistors Q_{ar} and Q_{br} are selected by the column decoder. Fig. 1 shows an example in which a column select line YS_r corresponding to these gates is directly connected. Thirdly, a plurality (m pieces

15 here) of NMOS transistors Q_{Cr} and Q_{Dr} ($r=1, \dots, m$) for driving corresponding data lines DL and source lines SL to a precharge voltage VDL are placed, and a precharge enable signal PC is connected to the gates of these transistors. It is possible, according to this

20 configuration, to drive the source line corresponding to the data line to be selected from a plurality of data lines DL and source lines SL driven by a precharge voltage VPC. To be more specific, it is possible to apply a voltage difference only to the memory cell

25 connected to the data line and source line to be selected. Therefore, it is feasible to form the current path only on a desired memory cell on a select word line so as to generate a read signal only to a

select data line.

The precharge circuit may be interpreted as the entirety of QC1, QD1 to QCm, and QDm, and QC1 and QD1 may be regarded as element precharge circuits
5 provided to each pair of DL1 and SL1.

(Characteristics of the Memory Element)

The memory element uses the chalcogenide material such as a Zn-Ge-Te series including zinc (Zn), germanium (Ge) and tellurium (Te) as a material of a
10 recording layer. This material is characterized in that, because its melting point and crystallization temperature are much higher than the materials such as a Ge-Sb-Te series experimented for the memory element in the past, it is usable at a high temperature, its
15 electric resistance is ~~high~~, and high and, optically, its transmittance is high and variation in complex refractive index due to the phase change is not significant. The characteristics of a phase change memory using the chalcogenide material are, for
20 example, described in IEEE International Electron Devices meeting, TECHNICAL DIGEST, pp. 803 to 806, 2001, ~~for instance~~. Here, the chalcogenide means the material including at least one element of sulfur, selenium and tellurium. In the case of writing memory
25 information 0' to this memory element, as shown in Fig. 3, a reset pulse is applied to heat the element to ~~be~~ a temperature higher than a melting point T_a of the chalcogenide material and then quench it. The

chalcogenide material is put in an amorphous state of high resistance if the reset pulse is shortened to reduce the entire given energy and a cool time t_1 is set shorter to approximately 1 ns, for instance.

5 Inversely, in the case of writing memory information 1', the chalcogenide material is put in a polycrystalline state of low resistance if a set pulse is applied to keep the memory element in a temperature area higher than a crystallization temperature T_{x_1} ,

10 which is lower than the melting point and equal to or higher than a glass transition point. While a time t_2 required for crystallization is different according to a composition of the chalcogenide material, it is approximately 50 ns for instance. The temperature of

15 the element shown in Fig. 3 depends on Joule heat generated by the memory element itself and thermal diffusion to its surroundings. Therefore, as indicated by characteristics I to V in Fig. 4, a current pulse of a value according to write information is applied to

20 the memory element so as to control a crystalline state of the memory element. Fig. 4 schematically shows principles of operation of the memory element using the chalcogenide material. It shows that the memory information 1' is written in the case of applying a set

25 current in a range of I_{W1} to I_{W0} , and the memory information 0' is written in the case of applying a reset current over I_{W0} . However, either state may be 0' or 1'. Hereafter, four writing operations will be

described in detail according to Fig. 4.

First, in the case of writing 1' to the memory element in an initial state 1', if the set current is applied, it shuttles between the initial
5 state and a set area by following a low resistance curve in a set (crystalline) state so that the state is kept. Secondly, in the case of writing 0' to the memory element in the initial state 1', if the reset current is applied, it reaches the reset current by
10 following the low resistance curve in the set state. Next, melting partially starts due to the Joule heat so that conductivity gradually goes down. Furthermore, it is put in a high resistance state if the melting progresses. If the memory element in a liquid phase is
15 quenched, the phase changes to the amorphous state, and so it returns to the initial state by following the high resistance curve in the reset (amorphous) state which is a little lower than the resistance in the liquid phase. The portion indicated by a dotted line
20 in Fig. 4 represents a virtual line which shows a supposed change in the current due to the change in a resistance value in the case of applying the voltage as-is even though the reset pulse has already run out. Thirdly, in the case of writing 1' to the memory
25 element in the initial state 0', if the set current is applied, it switches to a low resistance state when a terminal voltage of the memory element exceeds a threshold voltage V_{th} . The crystallization progresses

due to the Joule heat being generated after the
switching. If a current value reaches the set current,
a crystallization area expands and the phase changes,
and so the resistance value further decreases and it
5 returns to the initial state by following the low
resistance curve. Inclination of a volt-ampere curve
becomes gentle at the middle because the area switched
to the low resistance state is switched off so that
only reduced resistance due to the crystallization
10 remains. Fourthly, in the case of writing 0' to the
memory element in the initial state 0', there is little
time for the crystallization after the aforementioned
switching, and so it reaches a reset area by following
the low resistance curve due to the switching so as to
15 perform the melting, quenching and solidification and
return to the initial state.

In view of such principles of operation of
the memory element, it needs to operate while
controlling the voltage to be lower than the threshold
20 voltage V_{th} at the maximum so as not to destroy the
memory information on reading. In reality, the
threshold voltage also depends on voltage application
time, and tends to be reduced if the time is long.
Therefore, it needs to be the voltage which does not
25 exceed the threshold voltage and cause the switching to
the low resistance state within reading time.
Therefore, the operation for implementing the
configuration of the memory array shown in Fig. 1 based

on the principles will be described below.

(Reading Operation)

Next, according to Fig. 5, a ~~memory cell~~
reading operation ~~by using~~ of a memory cell of the
5 array configuration shown in Fig. 1 will be described.
Here, Fig. 5 shows operation waveforms in the case of
selecting a memory cell MC11.

First, the precharge enable signal PC is held
at a line voltage VDD (1.5V for instance) in a standby
10 state, and so the data lines DL and the source lines SL
are kept at the precharge voltage VDL by the NMOS
transistors QC and QD. Here, VDL is 1.0V, for
instance, ~~as the~~ which is a value lower than VDD just
by the threshold voltage of the transistors. The
15 common data line I/O is also precharged at the
precharge voltage VDL by the read circuit RC.

If the reading operation starts, the
precharge enable signal PC which is at the line voltage
VDD is driven ~~by~~ to a ground potential VSS, and a
20 column select line YS1 which ~~has the~~ is at ground
potential VSS is driven by a pressure rising potential
VDH (1.5V or more for instance) so that the transistors
QA1 and QB1 conduct. At this time, the data line DL1
is kept at the precharge voltage VDL because it is
25 equipotential to the common data line I/O while the
source line SL1 is driven at a source voltage VSL (0.5V
for instance) by the transistor QB1. As for the source
voltage VSL and the precharge voltage VDL, the

precharge voltage VDL is higher than the source voltage VSL, and the difference thereof is set to be in a relationship in which the terminal voltage of a resistance RM is within a range of a read voltage area
5 shown in Fig. 4. Next, if a word line WL1, which has the ground potential VSS, is driven by the pressure rising potential VDH, the transistors QM in all the memory cells on the word line WL1 conduct. At this time, the current path is generated in the memory cell
10 MC11 having generated a potential difference in the memory element RM, so that the data line DL1 and the common data line I/O are discharged toward the source voltage VSL at a speed according to the resistance value of the memory element RM. In the drawing, the
15 resistance value is smaller and so discharge is faster in the case of holding the memory information 1' than the case of holding the memory information 0'. Therefore, a signal voltage according to the memory information is generated.

20 _____ As for nonselective memory cells MC12 to MC1m, the potential difference in the memory element RM is 0 so that nonselective data lines DL12 to DL1m are kept at the precharge voltage VDL. To be more specific, only the memory cell MC11 selected by the
25 word line WL1 and the source line SL1 applies a read current through the data line DL1. Here, it is possible, if after having read information discriminated by the read circuit RC, to let the word

line WL1 fall. If the word line WL1 is continuously set up when this discrimination is late, there are the cases where, on reading the memory information 0', the selected data line DL1 is discharged to a vicinity of
5 the source voltage VSL so that the difference between the signal voltage of reading 0' and the signal voltage of reading 1' decreases and the memory information can no longer be correctly read. In such a case, as in the drawing, it is possible to prevent a malfunction by
10 letting the word line WL1 fall in timing before a data line voltage in the case of reading 0' exceeds a reference voltage VDR. It is possible, by letting the word line fall and blocking the current path, to keep the signal voltage on the common data line I/O so as to
15 have the read circuit RC discriminate a generated positive or negative signal in reference to the reference voltage VDR. If the above reading operation is finished, the common data line I/O is driven by the precharge potential VDL so as to return to the standby
20 state.

In the standby state, if the data lines and the source lines of the memory array are floated, a ~~capacity~~ capacitance of the data line of which voltage is indefinite is charged from the common data line ~~on~~
25 upon connecting the data lines to the common data line at a start of the operation. For this reason, in Fig. 5, the column select line YS1 is also ~~let~~ allowed to fall according to the word line WL1, and furthermore,

the precharge enable signal PC which is the ground potential VSS is driven ~~at~~ to the line voltage VDD so as to drive the data lines and the source lines at the precharge voltage VDL and thereby put them in the

5 standby state. The pressure rising potential VDH is the voltage widely used for DRAMs in the past, and is set up to satisfy the relationship of $VDH > VDD + V_{TN}$ by using the line voltage VDD and a threshold voltage V_{TN} of the NMOS transistors. For instance, in the writing

10 operation of the phase change memory, it is necessary to apply a larger current than that in the reading operation, as will be described later. For this reason, the present invention allows a correct writing operation to be performed by driving the word line WL

15 and the column select line YS at the pressure rising potential VDH and thereby reducing the resistance of the NMOS transistors. It is also possible, by setting the precharge voltage VDL higher than the source voltage VSL, to have the source of the transistors QM

20 in the select memory cells as the select source line so as to secure the voltage between the gate and the source of the transistors independently from the resistance of the memory element RM. Even in the case of an inverse potential relationship, the same

25 selective operation is possible if the difference thereof is set within the range of the read voltage area shown in Fig. 3.

Fig. 5 is an example of driving the source

line SL1 and then driving the word line WL1. It is also possible, depending on convenience of design, to drive the word line WL1 and then drive the source line SL1. In this case, the word line WL1 is driven first
5 and the select transistors QM conduct, and so the terminal voltage of the memory element RM is secured at 0V. Thereafter, the terminal voltage of the memory element RM becomes higher than 0V if the source line SL1 is driven. However, that value is controllable by
10 a driving speed of the source line SL1 so as to be within the range of the aforementioned read voltage area. Likewise, it is also possible to almost simultaneously drive the word line WL1 and the source line SL1. ~~And if~~ If the column select line YS1 is
15 driven by preceding the pulse of a later drive timing of the word line WL1 and the source line SL1, it is possible to reduce a waiting time for an output to the I/O so as to accelerate access. In this case, as a matter of course, connections should be changed to
20 independently drive the transistors QA1 and QB1 shown in Fig. 1.

The example of selecting the memory cell MC11 was shown above. The remaining memory cells on the same data line are not selected because a word line
25 voltage thereof is fixed at the ground potential VSS, respectively. ~~And the~~ The remaining memory cells are also kept in a state of the nonselective memory cells because other data lines and source lines are at the

same potential VDL.

In the above description, the word lines in the standby state are at the ground potential VSS, and the source lines in a selection state are at the positive source voltage VSL such as 0.5V. This voltage relationship is set up so that the current passing through the nonselective memory cells does not influence the operation. To be more specific, it should be set up so that, when the source line is selected and the word line has the nonselective memory cell such as the memory cell MC11 selected, the transistors QM of the nonselective memory cells such as MC21 to MCn1 are sufficiently off. As shown here, it is possible to reduce the threshold voltage of the transistors QM by rendering the word line voltage in the standby state as the ground potential VSS and rendering the source voltage VSL as the positive voltage. As the case may be, it is also possible to render the selected source line as the ground potential 0V and rendering the word line in the standby state as negative voltage. It is also possible to reduce the threshold voltage of the transistors QM in that case.

Although it is necessary to generate the negative voltage for the word line in the standby state, it is easy to stabilize the source line voltage on the selection because it is the ground potential VSS applied from the outside. If the threshold voltage of the transistors QM is sufficiently high, the source

line on the selection and the word line in the standby state may be at the ground potential 0V. In that case, it is possible to further stabilize the source line voltage on the selection because it is the ground
5 potential VSS applied from the outside and besides, the ~~capacitance~~ capacitance of the word line in the standby state works as a stabilization ~~capacitance~~ capacitance.

Furthermore, a description was given here as to the operation of discriminating the signal voltage
10 read to the common data line I/O with the read circuit RC. However, the operation of discriminating the current passing on the common data line I/O is also possible. In that case, a sense circuit ~~of which~~ with
a low input impedance, which is ~~low as~~ described in the
15 aforementioned United States Patent No. 5,883,827, is used for the read circuit RC. It is possible, by using a method of sensing the current, to reduce influence of a wiring ~~capacitance~~ capacitance of the common data line so as to reduce the reading time.

20 (Writing Operation)

Furthermore, according to Fig. 6, a memory cell writing operation by using the array configuration shown in Fig. 1 will be described. Here, Fig. 6 shows the operation waveforms in the case of selecting the
25 memory cell MC11.

First, a selection operation of the memory cell MC11 is performed as with the reading operation. Once the memory cell MC11 is selected, the write

circuit WC drives the common data line I/O so that a write current IWC is generated. In the case of writing 0', the reset current set at the value in the range shown in Fig. 4 is applied to the memory cell MC11. A pulse width of the reset current is short, and it returns to the standby state immediately after the driving so that the current value becomes 0. Such a reset current generates the Joule heat which is the same as the reset pulse shown in Fig. 3. Inversely, in the case of writing 1', the set current set at the value in the range shown in Fig. 4 is applied. The pulse width thereof is approximately 50 ns. Such a set current generates the Joule heat which is the same as the set pulse shown in Fig. 3. Thus, the application time and current value of a write pulse are controlled by the write circuit WC. Therefore, the memory cells are in the selection state just by the pulse width of the set current whichever memory information is written.

20 (Memory Cell Configuration)

Next, an example of the memory array configuration will be described. This configuration is characterized by placing active regions of the MOS transistors aslant to the word lines, data lines and source lines. It implements a memory cell configuration in which the source lines are wired with a first metal layer, the data lines are wired with a second metal layer, and the source lines are provided

correspondingly to the data lines.

Fig. 7 shows a layout. In Fig. 7, reference character FL denotes an active region pattern, FM denotes a first metal layer pattern such as a source line SL and a power feeder, SM denotes a second metal layer pattern for the data line DL, TM denotes a third metal layer pattern for the column select line YS, FG denotes a first gate electrode pattern of the transistors formed on a silicon substrate, FCT denotes a first metal layer contact pattern, SCT denotes a second metal layer contact pattern, TCT denotes a third metal layer contact pattern, and WBF denotes an upper electrode layer of the memory element. Well-known optical lithography can be used for patterning all of these patterns. In Fig. 7, the memory elements are formed under the upper electrode layers WBF. A corresponding node name is indicated in a parenthesis after a pattern name. Therefore, it is easy to understand that the memory cell MC1m is placed at a position indicated at the intersection of the word line WL1, data line DLm and source line SLm for instance.

Fig. 8 is a diagram schematically showing a section of the memory array viewed vertically to the data line. Reference numeral 100 denotes a P-type semiconductor substrate, 101 denotes an insulator for isolating the elements embedded in the P-type semiconductor substrate, 102 denotes an N-type diffusion zone area in the active region pattern FL in

Fig. 7, 103 denotes a gate oxide film of the transistor formed on the substrate, 104 denotes a gate electrode of the transistor formed on the substrate, 105 denotes a side wall formed with an insulating film on the transistor formed on the substrate. Reference numeral 200 denotes a first metal layer used for the source line SL and power feeder and so on. Reference numeral 201 denotes a second metal layer used for the data line DL and so on, 202 denotes a third metal layer used for the column select line YS, 203 denotes an interlayer insulating film, 204 denotes a contact for connecting the N-type diffusion zone area 102 with the first metal layer 200, and 205 denotes the contact for connecting the first metal layer 200 with the second metal layer 201. Furthermore, reference numeral 208 denotes a Ti-Al-N layer which is a lower heating member of the memory element RM, 304 denotes a ~~W₈₀Ti₂₀~~ W₈₀Ti₂₀ upper electrode, 305 denotes a chalcogenide material film to be the memory element RM, and 306 denotes the contact for connecting the lower heating member 208 with the N-type diffusion zone area 102. The upper electrode has a smaller area than the chalcogenide material film so that the reset current will not be large by excessively losing heat from the chalcogenide material film. Here, Fig. 8 indicates the node name in the parenthesis after a layer name on the assumption of viewing the data line DLm and source line SLm from an array edge. For instance, it is possible, by the node name of the gate

electrode indicated by 104 in Fig. 8, to easily grasp placement of the select transistor and precharge transistor QCm and QDm.

The metal layers and contacts are formed with tungsten of a high melting point or its alloy such as $W_{80}Ti_{20}$ $W_{80}Ti_{20}$, for instance, in order to prevent deterioration of electrical characteristics due to heat treatment on forming upper layers and a chemical reaction and mutual diffusion between the chalcogenide material and the electrodes on rewriting many times. The contacts are formed as if to bury a clearance of a side wall 107. This processing technology is a so-called self-aligning process widely used for a DRAM in the past.

The memory element according to this embodiment has a high resistance value because the contact area of the chalcogenide material 305 and the lower heating member 208 is reduced by using the insulating film 203 as shown in Fig. 8. For this reason, it can generate high Joule heat with a small current so as to implement the phase change memory capable of a low-power writing operation. It is also possible, according to the layout shown in Fig. 7, to place the word lines with a minimum pitch of $2F$ (F is a minimum processing dimension) and the data lines with a pitch of $3F$ which is 1.5 times that of the word lines so as to implement the phase change memory cell of six times a square of F .

The following summarizes the effects of the above-mentioned configurations and operations of the memory array and memory ~~cell~~ cells therein. First, the memory array according to this embodiment has the

5 source line SL parallel with the data line DL and has the source of the select transistor QM in the memory cell connected to the corresponding source line SL as shown in Fig. 1, and so it is possible to reduce power consumption in the reading operation. To be more

10 precise, the transistors QA and QB are placed on the data line DL and source line SL, respectively, and the precharge transistors QC and QD are further placed on the data line DL and source line SL side of the precharge circuit, respectively. It is possible, in

15 such a configuration, to drive the source line corresponding to the selected data line ~~at~~ to the source voltage VSL. For this reason, it is possible to form the current path only in the cell at the intersection of the select word line and select source

20 line so as to generate the read signal only on the ~~select~~ selected data line. Therefore, it is feasible, by controlling charge and discharge of the nonselective data lines, to reduce the power consumption in the reading operation of the phase change memory and ~~an~~ a

25 MRAM for instance. In the case of applying the present invention to the phase change memory, the selection operation, as in the case of the reading operation, is performed in the writing operation so that the low-

power phase change memory can be implemented as a whole.

The memory array according to this embodiment has the potential of the nonselective data lines kept
5 by the selection operation mentioned as to the first effect. Therefore, it has little noise due to ~~capacity~~
capacitance coupling between the data lines, and is
capable of generating a stable read signal. Thus, it
is possible to implement the phase change memory of a
10 stable reading operation.

(Memory Cell Configuration Using Vertical Transistors)

Next, another example of the memory array configuration will be described. This configuration is characterized by using vertical MOS transistor as the
15 select transistor QM in a sub-array shown in Fig. 1.

Fig. 9 shows the layout. As in Fig. 7, reference character FL denotes the active region pattern, FM denotes the first metal layer pattern such as the source line SL, SM denotes the second metal
20 layer pattern for the data line DL, TM denotes the third metal layer pattern for the column select line YS, FG denotes the first gate electrode pattern of the transistors formed on the silicon substrate, SG denotes a second gate electrode pattern of the word line WL,
25 that is, the vertical transistor, FCT denotes the first metal layer contact pattern, SCT denotes the second metal layer contact pattern, and TCT denotes the third metal layer contact pattern. Here, the memory cell is

created by laminating the vertical transistors and chalcogenide in the area in which the second gate electrode pattern SG and the second metal layer pattern SM are intersecting. The well-known optical lithography can be used for the patterning of these patterns. In Fig. 9, the corresponding node name is indicated in the parenthesis after the pattern name on the assumption that a line A to A' is indicated on the data line DLm and a line B to B' is indicated on the word line WL1. For instance, it is easy to understand that the memory cell MC1m is placed at the position indicated at the intersection of the word line WL1 and the data line DLm.

Fig. 10 shows the section (hereafter, referred to as the section A to A') of the portion along the line A to A' shown in Fig. 9. Likewise, Fig. 11 shows the section (hereafter, referred to as the section B to B') of the portion along the line B to B' shown in Fig. 9. In Figs. 10 and 11, reference numeral 100 denotes the P-type semiconductor substrate, 101 denotes the insulator for separating the elements embedded in the P-type semiconductor substrate, 102 denotes the N-type diffusion zone area in the active region pattern FL in Fig. 9, 103 denotes the gate oxide film of the transistor formed on the substrate, 104 denotes the gate electrode of the transistor formed on the substrate, 105 denotes the side wall formed with an insulating film on the transistor formed on the

substrate. Reference numeral 200 denotes the first metal layer used for the source line SL, power feeder, common data line I/O and so on, 201 denotes the second metal layer used for the data line DL and so on, 202
5 denotes the third metal layer used for the column select line YS, 203 denotes the interlayer insulating film, 204 denotes the contact for connecting the N-type diffusion zone area 102 with the first metal layer, and 205 denotes the contact for connecting the first metal
10 layer with the second metal layer, 206 denotes the contact for connecting the second metal layer with the third metal layer, 207 denotes the contact for connecting the first metal layer with the gate electrode 104 of the transistor formed on the
15 substrate, and 208 denotes a resistant heating layer comprised of ZnTe. It may also be the material wherein a 5 group element is added to ZnTe from another element 3 of less than 10 atom percent. Furthermore, reference numeral 301 denotes the N-type polysilicon to be a
20 source electrode of a vertical transistor PM, 302 denotes an intrinsic polysilicon with no added impurity to be a channel of the vertical transistor PM, 303 denotes the N-type polysilicon to be a drain electrode of the vertical transistor PM, 305 denotes the
25 chalcogenide material to be the memory element RM, 304 denotes the upper electrode, 306 denotes the gate oxide film formed on the side wall of the vertical transistor, 307 denotes the gate electrode, that is,

the word line WL of the vertical transistor, 308 denotes the interlayer insulating film formed between the data line DL and the word line WL, and 309 denotes a side wall oxide film.

5 If a thin layer of a dielectric such as an oxide, a nitride, a sulfide or a carbide or a mixed film of the dielectrics and the chalcogenide material is formed between the chalcogenide material for the memory and one of the electrodes or a resistant heating
10 member, the dielectric in that area has a filament-like area of the chalcogenide formed therein on an initial setting to the low resistance state, which becomes a thin conductive path. It is possible, as the current passes only on that path and the phase changes, to
15 obtain a high resistance value and a low operating current value. A desirable dielectric material is the one having a main constituent (constituting 60 percent or more) of a germanium oxide, a germanium nitride, a silicon oxide, a silicon nitride, an aluminum nitride,
20 a titanium nitride, an aluminum oxide, a titanium oxide, a chromium oxide, a tantalum oxide, a molybdenum oxide, a silicon carbide or a zinc sulfide, or a mixed material thereof. These materials also have an effect to increase adhesive force between the chalcogenide
25 material layer and the electrodes or insulator. It is desirable that this dielectric material film is in contact with one of the electrodes, and it is most desirable to have it provided in contact with a

negative electrode in terms of stability of a memory operation considering that the filament is formed by a positive ion. However, it can also operate in a state of in which it is not contacting neither either electrode. In the case of a mixed layer of the dielectric material and chalcogenide, there was no high resistance effect unless the content of the chalcogenide is less than 60 mole percent.

According to this embodiment, a 5 nm-thick film which is a mixture of 70 percent of ~~Ta₂O₅~~ Ta₂O₅ and 30 percent of a recording layer material is provided. Film thickness is in the range of 2 nm to 25 nm, and a resistance ratio is kept at one digit or higher so as to ensure a rise in the resistance of twice or more. If the film thickness is small, there is no problem because a dielectric layer originally has a pinhole in which the chalcogenide material enters. In the case of the film thickness of 15 nm or more, however, it is necessary to initially apply the voltage higher by 1.5 times or more with a stably operational voltage and cause a dielectric breakdown so as to form the filament. Such a method of providing the layer having the filament-like area constantly formed and the effects thereof are in common even in the case of using the recording layer outside the range of the composition of the recording layer material of the present invention such as a ~~Ge₂Sb₂Te₅~~ Ge₂Sb₂Te₅ recording layer. However, there are further effects of

the higher resistance and lower currents when combined with the recording layer of the present invention of which resistance value is higher than that of the ~~Ge₂Sb₂Te₅~~ Ge₂Sb₂Te₅ recording layer. The reset
5 (amorphous) current became 80 microamperes.

Here, as with Fig. 9, Figs. 10 and 11 indicate the node name in the parenthesis after the layer name on the assumption that the line A to A' is indicated on the data line D_{Lm} and the line B to B' is
10 indicated on the word line W_{L1}. For instance, it is possible, by the node name of the gate electrode indicated by 104 in Fig. 10, to easily grasp the placement of the gate electrodes of the transistors Q_{Am}, Q_{Bm}, Q_{Cm} and Q_{Dm}.

15 Thus, it is possible, by using the vertical transistors, to make a so-called cross-point cell formed at each intersection of the word line and the data line. To be more specific, if the word line and the data line are processed in the minimum processing
20 dimension F, the area of the memory cell becomes four times the square of F. Therefore, it is possible to implement a highly integrated and high-capacity phase change memory.

In an off state, the vertical transistor used
25 here has the intrinsic polysilicon 302 which is a channel area completely depleted, and operates as a so-called complete depletion SOI (Silicon On Insulator) transistor. For this reason, adjustment of the

threshold voltage is difficult compared to the MOS transistor on the substrate. As described in conjunction with the reading operation shown in Fig. 5, a voltage setting in which the potential of the word lines in the standby state is lower than that of the source lines in the selection state is suitable because the threshold voltage of the vertical transistor can be low.

The above mainly described the phase change memory having the memory cell comprised of one memory element using the chalcogenide material and one transistor. However, the configuration of the memory cell is not limited to it.

The element according to this embodiment is capable of rewriting a million times or more, and can be manufactured at a high yield ratio.

As for the characteristics of the element according to this embodiment, dependency thereof on the chalcogenide recording layer material is as follows. A desirable content range of Zn is 20 atom percent to 50 atom percent. If it is less than that, an upper limit temperature capable of a continuous operation becomes lower than 140°C so that its practical use in an application requiring a high-temperature operation is difficult. If it is more than that, oxidation resistance is reduced so that the recording layer is damaged or exfoliated in a memory element production process and it is not possible to pass it to a final

process. An especially desirable range is 25 atom percent to 35 atom percent. If it is within this range and if the content of Ge or Sb is in the range of 25 atom percent to 35 atom percent, there is no problem as to the process and the operation at 140°C or higher is possible. The element characteristics are good even if it includes at least one element selected from a 2b group, a 1b group, 3a to 7a groups and an 8 group other than Zn. To obtain a high crystallization temperature, however, Zn is most desirable, and Cd is the next. The desirable content range of Ge or Sb is less than 40 atom percent. If it exceeds 40 atom percent, the melting point lowers and a volume change due to the phase change exceeds an acceptable value, and exfoliation occurs at less than 100,000 times of rewriting. A more desirable range is 25 atom percent to 35 atom percent. In the case of Ge, if less than that, particles ~~fell~~ fall off a target on sputtering and the yield ratio became less than 50 percent. If more than that, both the melting point and crystallization temperature are lowered ~~lower~~ and the upper limit temperature capable of the continuous operation becomes lower than 130°C so that it is difficult in terms of practicality. In the case of Sb, 25 percent or more is desirable because, if less than that, the oxidation resistance is insufficient and the yield ratio of the process becomes less than 50 percent. However, it is not ~~so~~ as effective at

preventing target particles from falling, and so there is no problem if capable of sputtering by a sputter-up method while there is a problem in the case of a sputter-down method. If the content of Te is less than 5 40 atom percent, it is ~~so~~ very difficult to render it amorphous that it ~~is no longer changed by~~ stops changing state in less than 10 times of rewriting. Other than those described above, it may include In, Si, Sn, Bi, Pb, Se, N, O, H and transition metal 10 elements for example Au, Ag and Ti by less than 10 atom percent. As for In, Sn, Bi and Pb, there is the effect of improving a crystallization speed by 30 percent or more by adding 3 atom percent or more. Si and Se have the effect of preventing oxidation during the 15 production process.

Both of the above Ge and Sb may be included. In that case, it is desirable that a sum of the content of either element is in a desirable content range as if included alone respectively. It is possible to provide 20 features of both if the ratio between Ge and Sb is in the range of 1:2 to 2:1.

As for a heating member in the upper portion of the lower contact (plug), the Joule heat thereof can, ~~supplementarily~~ additionally, heat the lower 25 portion of the recording layer in the case of, instead of TiAlN, using the same material of which melting point is 1,000°C or higher and content of Zn or Cd is more than the recording layer material by 10 atom

percent or more, so that it is possible to reduce the reset current by approximately 30 percent compared to the case of a double contact and obtain a good multiple rewriting characteristic.

5 There is an advantage of increasing the number of times capable of rewriting by accumulating a barrier film of the nitride and oxide of the transition metal such as TiAlN, a film of the same material of which melting point is 1,000°C or higher and content of
10 Zn or Cd is more than the recording layer material by 10 atom percent or more, a metal conductive film such as ~~W₈₀Ti₂₀~~ W₈₀Ti₂₀ or a film stack thereof. It is also possible, as a matter of course, to put a conductive
15 film of a low thermal conductivity such as ITO (mixture of indium and the oxide of tin) in between for the purpose of curbing thermal diffusion required to change a phase state of the chalcogenide.

 According to the above embodiment, it is possible, as the resistance value is high, to combine
20 it with a high-resistance transistor and reduce the reset current. As its photo transmittance is high, a multilayer memory by exposure to light and voltage application is possible. It is also possible, in terms of the process, to control concavity and convexity on a
25 surface of a sputtering target and improve a production yield. It is also effective at improving the number of times capable of rewriting and reducing the reset current if a similar material is used for the plug in

the lower portion of the recording layer.

(Second Embodiment)

According to this embodiment, an address of the memory element is specified not only electrically but also by using the light. The elements are laminated in four layers vertically to a substrate surface so as to increase the number of elements per area. In this case, the recording layer including the 2 group elements such as Zn and Cd is advantageous because of a broad optical band gap. For instance, a ~~Zn₂₅Ge₂₅Te₅₀~~ Zn₂₅Ge₂₅Te₅₀ recording layer is used.

As shown in Fig. 12, a light 93 of a semiconductor laser 91 of 660 nm wavelength is led by a guide mirror to a mirror reflector array 97 of 500 × 500 pieces of 16 μm square formed by silicon single crystals which is one of MEMS technologies. Each individual mirror of the mirror reflector array is in charge of a memory element group of four layers of 20 × 20 pieces in a plane, and is capable of turning around one axis by ±15 degrees. Each mirror has a cylindrical lens formed on a memory element group side, and forms an elongate light spot of 0.5 μm width and 16 μm length. One line of the element group of 32 lines which the vertical mirror in the drawing is in charge of is lighted by a change in a mirror angle. Each element has four layers as in a partially enlarged view. Each layer is constituted to sandwich the chalcogenide recording layer with ITO transparent

electrodes, where a SiO₂ heat insulating layer of 50 nm is formed between the layers. The transparent electrode on one side of the element in each layer is divided into 16 vertically long rectangular pieces per mirror, and horizontal address specification in the drawing is performed by selecting the electrode. Vertical layer selection is performed by selecting a pair of transparent electrodes and applying the voltage thereto. It is thereby possible to implement a simple device configuration and price reduction even if rendered four-layer. If alignment of a mirror array and the memory array is thereby performed precisely, there is also a merit in removing the memory array from the device to replace it. Each mirror is driven by an electrostatic force or an electromagnetic force by means of a transistor array in the lower portion thereof. The technique of the multilayer light current memory element is disclosed in U.S. Serial No. 10/336,717 of joint inventor, the content of which is incorporated by reference herein.

A photo carrier is generated in the memory element by laser irradiation, which is accelerated in an electric field to intensify the carrier so that the reading by recording and resistance can be performed only by the element to which both the light and voltage are provided. The reading is performed by an optical power of approximately 1/5 times the recording.

According to this embodiment, it is essential

that the photo transmittance of the memory element in each layer is 30 percent or more. It is designed to be 50 percent or more in reality.

According to this embodiment, the range of
5 the desirable composition of the recording layer is the same as in the first embodiment. In the case of this embodiment, it is important that the photo transmittance of the recording layer is high. While the composition of ~~Zn₅₀Te₅₀~~ Zn₅₀Te₅₀ is desirable on
10 that point, a desirable composition range and a preferable composition range are the same as those in the first embodiment because there are the conditions on the process and phase change described in the first embodiment.

15 In the case of using an array laser as a laser light source for instance, it is possible to speed up a data transfer rate to close to four times by simultaneously sending a laser to a plurality of mirrors.

20 The number of the mirror reflector arrays can be increased to 1500 × 1500 or so in the case of the use requiring a high capacity.

It is possible, according to the embodiment, to obtain a large memory capacity with a simple device
25 configuration.

According to the present invention, it is possible to obtain high heat resistance in the memory using a phase change material. As the memory element

using the material hereof is capable of the high-temperature operation, it is sufficiently usable for the application in which an ambient temperature is apt to rise such as an in-vehicle use.

5 It should be further understood by those skilled in the art that although the foregoing description has been made on embodiments of the invention, the invention is not limited thereto and various changes and modifications may be made without
10 departing from the spirit of the invention and the scope of the appended claims.